

The LongPath

A North Alabama DX Club Publication

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How to Join

- * Come to a club meeting;
- * or send in an application by mail (form on www.NADXC.org)
- * or call Tom Duncan at (256)705-2147

From the President

By Mark Brown, N4BCD

Where did February go? It's a short month but wow, seems we just got over celebrating Alabama NOT winning the NCAA Football Championship.

Here we are in early March, with the hours of daylight growing longer, the blades of grass growing taller, and our propagated electromagnetic energy not accomplishing much of anything. The 3830 posts from the last few contests echo the same sentiment – propagation is not good.

So we make DX where we can find it. A fleeting few hours of 15m opening to the Pacific where E51DWC thanked me for giving him TN in a phone contest. Another exchange with Tom PJ7TM turned into more than the standard 59 TN QSO – made me envious of his idyllic island life. VP6EU was relatively easy – if one was at the radio at the right time of day. I vowed not to write about XX9D (heard them once) but since several club members did work them I'll admit there's always hope for DX on at least some band.

Three DXpeditions in Africa activated shortly before this issue reached you. On March 9, a team of mostly EU hams activated 5U5R Niger. This one seems easy based on the number of club members atop the leaderboard already.

Transmitter IMD

Program by John Stensby, N5DF

We spend a lot of time worrying about receiver performance, but not so much about what we may be inflicting on other hams through our transmitters. Hear our Vice President probe transmitter intermodulation distortion. Get to the Golden Corral around 6:00 pm for dinner, 7:00 for the business meeting, with the program beginning no later than 7:30. See you there!

As this is written N4KG leads the club with 7 QSO's. There's also 9G5X Ghana which activated on March 7, and TU7C activated March 10 to keep our heads between the phones. I'm sure there are others so be sure to check out your favorite DX news source.

A visit to the Orlando Hamcation to rally commercial & flea-market vendors seems to be paying dividends. At least one new commercial vendor has signed up to attend Huntsville. Orlando is 621 miles from Huntsville. Dayton is only 435 miles. Yes Orlando's farther but after experiencing their weather in February I can honestly say it beats Dayton's WX any month of the year. Another benefit was getting well known contesteer Tim Duffy K3LR also of DXEngineering connected up with our Huntsville Forum coordinator. This will be Tim's first visit to the Huntsville Hamfest. I'll also be visiting Dayton as Huntsville Hamfest's representative.

Our Club's weekly net on the W4QB repeater has gotten off the ground and we're hopeful the participation continues to grow and it becomes a weekly habit folks look forward to. It starts around 8PM on Tuesday evenings in weeks we're not having a club meeting.

73,

Mark N4BCD



February Meeting Minutes

By Kelley Johns, W4VPZ—NADXC Secretary/Treasurer

Members attending 17

Guests 2

Announcements

Kevin KG4TEI announced a second harmonic arriving at the end of August or early in September. Congratulations! *[That is, a second first harmonic, not a first second harmonic—ed.]*

The Hamfest Banquet details were discussed at the club officers meeting: The banquet venue will be the Best Western Madison again. Our guest speaker will be Bob Allphin K4UEE on: "A Preview of the Upcoming Bouvet Island DXpedition (3Y0Z) : The Challenges and the Adventure." We will need club members to help with greeting and hosting the banquet.

We are starting a weekly net on W4QB repeater to encourage more conversational usage. The first session will be one week from tonight at 8:02 PM. There will be no net on meeting nights. We need net control operators.

Our annual DX Club picnic will be held on Sept. 16. Kelley W4VPZ will host it at her Monte Sano home. Details will be determined at a later date.

Review of Sign-in Sheet & DX worked

AI W4ABW TL8TT, TU5MH, XF2L (NA221), S01WS, 40/KCOW, TZ5XR, 5T9VB

Bob K8KI TL8TT x 3

Tom N4KG TL8TT 80-15

Steve AG4W TL8 160-15, OA, BY, OH0, 7ZI 106m by 3B8

Mark N4BCD TL8TT 80, 40, 20 15

The XX9D (Macao) activation was mentioned.

Kelley W4VPZ Treasurer's Report

Beginning Balance \$ 3,709.29

ARRL Spectrum Defense* -\$ 70.00

*matched Club members' donations

(check was mailed before Dec. 31, and cleared on Jan. 4)

Dues paid for 2017 \$ 196.00

Ending Balance \$ 3,835.29

Reminders to pay dues have been emailed to a few late-payers.

The DXCC listing has been updated on our web site. Please report any discrepancies to Kelley W4VPZ.

We have applications for 2 new members to approve:

Steve KD2JSW and Anita KD2KAG Vibbert.

Both were voted in to the club.

Tim AB4B announced that he would be operating a multi-op station for the upcoming ARRL CW contest. Any members interested in joining him are invited.

From Mark's Orlando Hamcation Notes:

According to Peter Meijers AI4KM Hamcation Director, they see around 13K visitors / year. Met him through his XYL Lidy who provided a vendor badge to get in early.

It was rare to find a vendor who DIDN'T know of Charlie's passing. The outpouring of affection for Charlie and Huntsville's event was significant.

Orlando hosted only 1 formal Contest Dinner sponsored by FCG. The location was about 20 minutes from the convention in an American Legion facility and

offered catered BBQ, beer, and soft drinks for \$25 / ticket. There were over 160 attending. Door prize value >\$3K. A chat with Dennis Motschenbacher the following day revealed that an attendance of >100 guests really opens up marketing & sales budgets for prizes. Guests were permitted to purchase additional door-prize tickets just after the program and just before the drawing. This statistically skewed the drawing results significantly. For example: a YL at my table bought 5 extra tickets and walked out with over \$350 in prizes.

Orlando opted to put their information booth and prize barrel in the back of the farthest building - enticing people to trek there to deposit their ticket stubs.

Overheard several big company reps talk about their concern at lack of info out of Dayton - less than 100 days away. I counted at least 8 Dayton Hamvention staff there.

Food concession variety and quality exceeded Dayton.

Outdoor flea market space was really spread out and sight blocked by all the large RV's.

There was a lone guy at a table in the remote building conducting the petition drive to recall the Southeaster Division Director.

Mark mentioned speaking with ARRL CEO Tom Gallagher N2YRF and Southeastern Division Director about a bias problem in the online survey being taken by the Entry Level License Committee. They noted they were already aware of the issue and gave assurances the issue would be corrected.

Program

Tom KG4CUY on Mixers in Industrial Electronics.

The Tail of the Six-Hour Antenna

By Mark Brown, N4BCD

Since losing an aged pine tree last spring I've struggled with how to support the SE end of my ladderline fed doublet. That 50' tall antenna had been a workhorse – decent enough performance on 80m and a narrowed lobe of gain on 40m into Europe. The tall oak anchoring the other end of the doublet and the tall pine in the middle are great supports, and the compromise solution was to use a cedar tree barely 25' tall at an off angle with noticeably reduced performance.

Like a golfer eyeing his next critical putt, I wore out the grass in my front yard eyeballing alternatives. A tall pine near the road that would be perfect – except that it's exactly in-line with the other two good trees. Surely I thought, there must be a way to get that wire up through the tangled soft branches of that middle pine.

This past week I put crossbow shots then ropes over the tall pine, a new rope through the south part of the oak canopy, and a pull-line over the center pine that would support the center insulator and ladderline. That prep work alone consumed several hours including explaining to curious neighbors why someone would want to put ropes over the tops of their trees.

The next task on March 8 was to prepare two long loops of Dacron rope looped over each wire leg. This would be tensioned from the ground to pull the rising wires around the center pine branches. The ladderline was also tensioned to keep the feedpoint from falling inward toward the trunk of the center pine. Finally all was ready to begin hoisting the ropes – 1) the pull rope on the NW end in the oak, 2) the pull rope on the center insulator, 3) the pull rope on the SE end in the tall pine, and 4) the dog-chain clip keeping tension on the ladderline toward the shack. The

antenna was just off the ground as darkness fell.

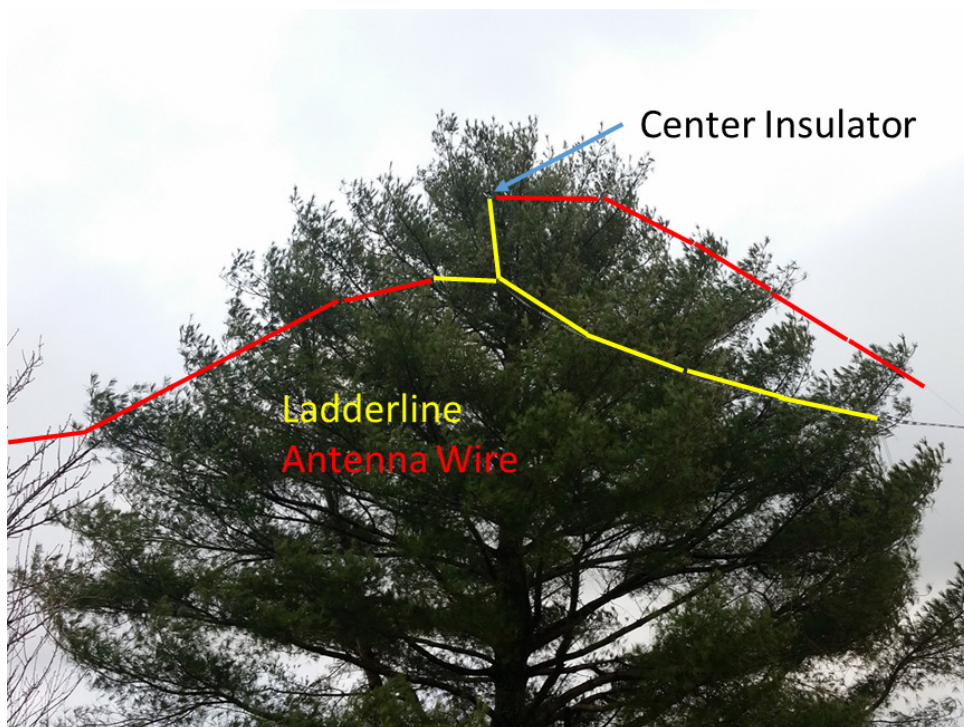
On March 9 the mission was to take it slow and incrementally tighten each rope while making sure the wires didn't go where gravity and Pathagoras predicted they would – into the center of the middle pine. Each rope was tightened only one to three feet at a time and I wore out more grass walking between the supports but finally I had the feedpoint near the top of the middle tree. The light was fading at 6:10 PM and there was probably some tweaking that could be done but it would have to wait.

Into the shack to turn on the radios and there's Bruce AC4G mid-sentence announcing 5U5R on 20m split. Three calls later he's in the log and I'm off to dinner. Later it's time to see what the new antenna will do on 40m. 5U5R is on 7065 listening between 7155 and 7165. I listened to his pattern and moved 300 Hz above his last Q. He had my suffix on the first call and I filled in the prefix on my next transmission.

Spent a little time writing my other Longpath article, then shut down and disconnected everything for the night. At 11:45 PM I woke to thunder and decided to get up to see what was predicted to be a high wind and rain event. At 12:03 AM I reported into SKYWARN 50 mph winds and nickel sized hail. Fortunately it only lasted a few minutes.

Morning daylight revealed the damage – the loop of wire into the NW end of the center insulator appears to have failed and “unzipped” about 10 feet of ladderline. It looks like it's still physically connected but RF wise it looks like a Delta match. Writing this against deadline so have not tried it.

So there it is, a DX antenna that lasted 6 hours. Good enough to work a DXpedition on their first night mayhem. Not good enough to survive Mother Nature.



DX Contests for March

By Chuck Lewis, N4NM

South America 10 Meter Contest (PH/CW), 10 Meters

Mar. 11, 1200Z to Mar. 12, 1200Z

Exchange: RS(T) plus CQ zone

See page 89, Mar. QST or

www.sa10m.com

Stew Perry Topband Challenge, (CW), 160 Meters

Mar. 11, 1500Z to Mar. 12, 1500Z

Exchange: 4-Character grid square

See page 89, Mar. QST or <http://www.kkn.net/stew/>

Russian DX Contest (PH/CW), 160 - 10 Meters

Mar 18, 1200Z to Mar 19, 1200Z

Exchange: RS(T) plus serial #; or RS (T) plus Oblast #

See page 89, Mar. QST or

www.rdxo.org

BARTG HF RTTY Contest, (DIG), 80 - 10 Meters

Mar 18, 0200Z to Mar 20, 0200Z

Exchange: RST plus 3-digit S.N. plus 4-digit time.

See page 89, Mar. QST or

www.bartg.org.uk

UBA Spring Contest, SSB (SSB), 80 Meters

Mar, 19, 0700Z to Mar 19, 1100Z

Exchange: RS, Serial, UBA section (if any)

See page 89 Mar. QST or

www.uba.be/hf/contest-rules

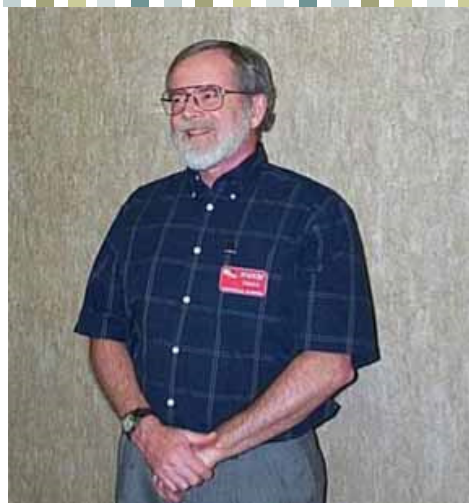
CQWW WPX Contest (PH), 160 - 10 meters

Mar 25, 0000Z to Mar 26, 2359Z

Exchange: RS plus Serial #.

See page 89, Mar. QST or

[www.cqwpw.com /rules.htm](http://www.cqwpw.com/rules.htm)



OTHER

SP DX Contest

1500Z, April 1, to 1500Z, April 2

LZ Open 40M Sprint,

0400Z to 0800Z, April 1

EA RTTY Contest,

1600Z, April 1 to 1600Z, April 2

JIDX CW Contest,

0700Z, April 8 to 1300Z, April 9

OK/OM DX Contest,

1200Z, April 8 to 1200Z, April 9

Dates & times often change or are misprinted in the journals; beware.

Chuck, N4NM

In Praise of the Well-Used Junk Box

By the LongPath Staff

Many of us have accumulated sizable junk-boxes over years as hams. They are replete with treasures of inestimable value, which one day will be put to use in that perfect project. Methuselah, I've been told, began his junk box at the age of 12, and on his 969th birthday could still point to many treasures acquired when he was yet a strapping young lad.

The junk box, aided by some imagination and the ability to forget about projects which may never happen, can be a great source of pleasure. Goofy little contraptions of no possible use to anyone once they are completed tax the gray matter just as surely as that magnum opus you'll launch any day

now. Take a new look at your junk box, with an eye toward having fun. Use some of that stuff, even if only so you can say "yes, I built my own ____" (fill in the blank). If it turns out to be a piece of junk, throw it back into the box—you will probably have learned something in the process.

Let your junk box help keep your mind and fingers active. Don't worry that you'll have wasted a priceless treasure on some worthless project — a good romp in a hamfest flea market can replenish the junk box should it run low.

Methuselah didn't take it with him!

The LongPath Staff

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